# POETRY QUARTERLY

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# EDITORIAL

The state of criticism at the present time has lately been receiving the attention of a good many distinguished writers. It is evident that, except in the case of one or two excellent critical articles in magazines like *Partisan* or *Horizon*, the average book review does not please the author, the publisher or the reader. Such articles, too, are nearly always concerned with writers who are either dead or sufficiently well known to make it easy for the critic to say the right thing about them pleasantly. No possibility of coming down on the wrong side of the fence is involved. The short review is another matter. So much so that the general public no longer pays any attention to them. Of course it is nice for the author to be able to quote complimentary little bits about his work which have appeared in respectable publications, but for who else? And it may be noted that it is the anonymous notices that are the worst offenders. For after all a review is nothing more nor less than someone's opinion of a book he has been given by the editor to read. When there is a signature one really does know what the opinion is worth. When there is none we cannot tell whether the reviewer is not just someone who is useful to fill up regrettable spaces while the colour of the editorial tomatoes is being inspected. At least those who do not possess the qualifications to make their opinions worth some attention should confine themselves to a description of the book helpful to the inquiring reader.

Poetry has, perhaps, less to complain about. It is much easier to get a book of verse reviewed than a work not classifiable as belonging to the other literary forms beloved of the compilers of reference lists. And the younger poets at least are not afraid of criticising each other's work competently, though some of them are still inclined to live too much in the gold fish globe of their own cliques and to forget that poetry is not finally affected by any -ic or -ism. The quality of the writing is the only thing which makes a poem live beyond one brief appearance in print.

# ERNST SIGLER

## *Dances for a Future*

### BLUES

Hail him, hurl flames on the night's barrel of tar:
the weak and the wrinkled, the lithe and the clever ones,
bring your trim torches to the top of the hill.
Climb slowly. Limp up the slope. Stop for breath. Wipe your grey
brow.
Bear in mind all the scars war has left on you.

Hail him. At the road's end a jubilant star
will greet you to paint over your sorrows a dance,
the harvest sickle replenish your joy. Do as he will
expect you to now, overcome the gigantic ache, now
light your torch, expose the grief you lived through.

Hail him. Where the mask is cut runs a vertical scar,
paled by the still cowering flame—that laughed at guns:
let it shout now, scream down the doubting echo until
the fiery tar unshadows all secret crevices. No
darkness tonight. Has your dream not come true?

Hail him. But wait. While he is still only a far-
off pinpoint: are you sure now, will you tell him at once?
You suffered, you. (Lucky he, to be in at the kill.)
Companionship, love, excitement were his, a charmed life. O
hail him: the hero comes back, the corn is new.

### PAVANE

Bow very low: here come the masterful ones:
a redness there is round their neck; or
their back is the trembling pattern of a leaf's veins;
their eyes, needled, see less well than before;
their legs, being absent, find it hard to dance.

Watch them: these are the real conquerors: they will turn
you against friends, take your last penny piece.
O beware of pity now. They are Europe: again:
whimpering, whining, taking his throne: peace
it is they bring, peace: they have won.

## VALSE TRISTE

Now without ending. Here at
the road's fork speak your goodbyes;
walk away forgetting that
you are once more alone, you
can never come back again.
Only the endless two ways,
the brown grass thirsting for dew,
the bestridden in-between land,
the silence drowning her voice,
contain unbearable loss.

Walk, dream. Now without ending
trace the set diagonal
of your split heart. O the song
and the bright oratory
have no value any more;
cool diagnoses will tell
the reasons for which men die;
love is a way to sell war,
freedom the last hedgehog's pose,
bravery a matter of lice.

Here, your *Huesca* in sight,
you dare not loiter, you must
pace the long treadmill till night.
Peace comes: you left far behind
abortive emotions, such
senses as you have are priced
too high for the dance; the blind
will grieve with you, the old touch
your clear heart and the hermit
pause at the point of your fight.

At the road's fork say Goodbye
to heather, the winding brook.
*Till death* is a sensuous lie
astrologers print for us:
you are alone all your life.
Walk up the hill, never look
back to the shadowy place:
your mask is safeguard enough,
your dreams can withstand the blare
now, without ghosts, without her.

## SARABAND

Here the wound-weary battlers halted,
breathing the name of ingrown voices, eyes, lips.
Stood on the floor's edge, bunched together,
scared of their hobnailed laughter: saw no masks.

And I among them knew but was afraid
to speak: already Shrove Tuesday it is, at
midnight carnival ends, the masks are
discarded, the fumes dissolve, with the doors thrown

open there is an end to basking,
dancing under the candelabras: then watch
the heat clear off to the roof with their grins.
O should I search for you where the metronome

languidly measures years towards midnight:
under the cool dark arches beyond the dance,
shall I find you there in shadow,
your eyes holding peace as we both imagined it?

Even the music whispers for us:
Ash Wednesday, end of our winter. Or should I
guide them who have returned, give figures
and facts, explain the situation to them:

after all, they too are strangers now
though lacking my years of practice. And truth needs
no solace, and words do away with
selfish ideas. But I have no strength for truth.

# FRED MARNAU

## *Thomas*

The cold heart, the redhot, the lost. The heart
of seven stigmata, and the dead.
But now look: see my frozen heart. And deep
in the depths where I am all alone struck
the new core, the bullet's lead. Through me froze death
and grasped my knee before I fell prostrate to the
earth, grasped my hand and thus, numb, I kneel and
my hand towers above me, the wild flag-end death
still holds high. As long as I am still of one piece
I dream back, dream that sudden lightning drives
into me, burning, wave beating, heart-opening,
melting down the foreign core. Waiting. O patience.
But when at last dust comes and the night:
what is to hold me then? When at last dust falls and
the night, with what then do I touch myself and
with what do I come to meet you? When at last in my breast
is caught the hot bird of spring, grows heavy,
and lends me once again his wailing voice and, too,
his heart, the second to die within me. And think,
the dust of wings lies down beside my dust.

But first comes the night and see how it finds me:
helmet over one eye, woollen scarf over my mouth, the coat like
a ploughed field, heavy and clodish. But the blue hand,
the cutting and wind-sharpening projecting limb,
the fingers five, the pleading fingers seeking your wound:
the sudden lightning. Forgive, it is fear, for this night
is not like one where a wineglass shivers to splinters, where
eyes glow and where dancing soon results from our song. High night
it is, Mount of Olives night. Strife gallops through thorny branches
and no tears but grenades are falling. Not the meteors and comets,
shiny bullets rush. (Strange: now all miss their mark.)
Mount of Olive night. Fear it is. Fear and also that
the earth's commonplaces have debased all faith for me and
I cannot like our brother Judas descend with you. But do
what no-one did: show me your brotherly grief. For many have
passed by here today. All had wounds, no-one had wounds. Kings

were among them, generals, black-hats: puppets all. I would like—
my dead mouth was itching—to have spat: but
the brothers came, killing and fleeing, broke down before me,
also devoured the black bread, the earth silent of sighs:
and then I did not spit. Mount of Olives night. Blood drips
like someone counting. A raven carried off my left eye and I
imagine someone might see this who used to know me and I giggle
mirthless, malicious. My frost-glass lip clatters. Softer, softer.
Soon finished dripping, finished counting. Icenight. Dust of wings.
Dreams of the dead.

Translated by ERNST SIGLER

## KENNETH GEE

### *Elegy*

There is no place to go that is quiet
Or free from hurt; for war will not leave
Any man alone, and even if he should look
In his mind's pool however deep
Where pearls might lie, these being found
Would still melt on a shore of fires
His and his brother's anger feeds,
Sometimes with words, sometimes
With fierce descending birds
That fall with their own flame.

Nor even a moment of calm lasts out
Beyond the taper of an evening shade
That will fade and falter into dusk
And be lost in moonless night;
Though it fall now in stillness on the lawn
Or dapple an animal at pasture,
Whose roots are in a world of peace
Summer earth is falsely witness to;
The rose's signature was got by force,
The stream of glass was sleeping.

Even here, the sound within the skull
Roars from the lions these years have bred,
And the world of anger is always at hand now

And will never be stilled. And always
The tune of evil figured in man's thought.
With armies for driven dancers
And wild geography of war
For a dancing floor, plays on,
And drums reality through dreams
So night and moon are wounded.

Reverberation in the walls,
Time that crumbles in the heart,
Shake ruin's echoes loudly on the darkness.
Beat of the mined, wreck-laden sea
Swaying over the deep and friendless drowned,
Hammers a song of storm against my window;
And on the river's flow are borne
The cries of widows and mothers
Haunting the stream that is their vein and eye
To seek the returning or the dead.

There is no quiet where rivers run,
And willows are fitly named now,
Whose boughs weep for a summer of blood
In noons the sun deceives for a moment only.
The wound is in the world of green, and the hurt
Has forced its way to the sleeping root.
The airy birdflight mocks our cage
And the sea's roar assaults the ear,
Echoing man's rage: sand is a shadow
Of silt that covers bone, far from this land.

## *At Night*

I hear the beat of twelve clocks striking twelve.
Faces turn away to sleep
To the bells that bear away
Day on dream's roses or on nightmare's thorns
That hold the myth for which we weep.

The night is noon-still. Dark leans over on
Sleepers on the seven seas;

Falls no more blindly than man's hand
That laid the ghost of daylight in war's wood
And lays his life to bleed on trees.

Fled years now crumble, shades within the shade
Night is only shadow to—
Our time, that winds its long, red shroud
Over wasting reaches of the fields
Where bone will tell the legend true.

I hear the dog howl at the city's door
And call his hunger to the moon.
Man dreams away his poverty
And shapes tomorrow with his sleeping hand
And writes the fable and the tune

Morning will break to echoes and a page
Whose words are real and lack the lilt
His tongue could father in the night.
Day's dancing riddles and ironic masks
Return to mock, and lay the guilt

And goodwill side by side, the dove and lion
That bred the ruin in his house
And drew the fires from his sun.
Day breaks to mourn in shades his woodland wears
And hang his wishes on lean boughs.

I hear the words now sounding from dead mouths:
Their tongues can summon still and plead
For more than wreath and burial.
O file on file the slain are eloquent
And words for us the red wounds bleed.

This night that bears the swaying of the bell
And twists the sleeping thought to bind
A cloth of wishes for our eyes,
Suspends their voices on the calm, to break
Flags of truth at morning's wind.

I hear the cries that breed from many soils,
From shadows sleep will never give

To innocence again to lull:
Tall trees that weep against the wall, they tell
The cruel myth in which we live.

## PETER URE

### *The Minute*

I might inform this minute,
Whose crystal is to break,
With all potential joy
And cram it full and break
Seals of grape and poison
That my heart should shake,
My world at once all baring
Till its foundations shake.
But trees say No, and mountains;
The time-blurred land I look
On to dissolution rushes
Where never laugh nor look
Release me from the silence.
It binds with fear the look
Particular minutes wear,
Announcing the great, bitter
Time when Time shall look
As circular, hostile mountain,
Recalling, that I shake
And long for heart to break,
This joyful, hostile minute,
This crystal, laugh, and look.

### *The Memory of the Future*

'If I forget thee, O my City
Whose breasts have suckled so much grief . . .'
Invocation's passionate noise
Echoes from the lost mouth.

All the wounds are starting open
And the torn-up roots must parch,
Hear the soldiers quickly walking.
Time's golden minute clutch,

Before the gold in all their eyes,
Before the buildings, white and large,
Before the statues and the traffic
Perish in one vast discharge.

Once I was furred with sighs
And thick with anger. Now I praise
That, though the rooms like leaves may split
Or wounds that open, triumph's not

A safer room, a cleaner city,
A buried pain, a singing bell,
Which do not matter, but are still
Monuments to a wished future.

The memory of our future is
A child to smile at or to kiss,
Its invocations bricks of wood
Left in the store-room when the child is dead.

For now our future rises dim
Like country seen through driving rain:
When all their ruined city's gone
The dispossessed track for another town,

Beyond a border not previously seen.
In another kind of dwelling
Perceptions of ourselves arise
Different from anger, separate from sighs.

But, while the wounds gape and the towers fall,
Here we struggle still:
Of all the memories difficult to kill
The memory of the future is the hardest.

# SEÁN JENNETT

## *Merchandise*

Driving down from the turf bog in the rain
He saw the broad boats drawn up to the strand
and the queer dark men who, ankle deep
in water, humped their bales on to the land,

and lashed his ass all down the mountain road
and offered turf for barter, turf to pay
for silk and wine: but those dark men
looked at his load and laughed, and turned away.

## *Mahoney*

Then Mahoney, standing in the surf,
the convoy hanging in the misty sea
and landing forces moving up the beach,
dropped down his arms, and said
I wait, O god, I wait
and these were his last words of common speech.

Christ in the shallows of the water walked
or in the sweaty hollow of his palm
appeared and spoke to his reluctant bone
or moved about the chambers of his skull,
the scourger of the temple, with a whip,
and in his heart also the lash had been.

So Mahoney stood and let his rifle fall
into the sea, where lug-worms claimed it, and
the servant tide; and heard his captain shout,
but did not move; and felt the weight of wheels
and tracks across the cortex of his brain;
but did not certainly hear that single shot.

Wife, children, parents, weep for him, who now
dead with the grey crabs and the starfish rests
where surges heap on him the slow and secret sand.
Yet even in the valleys of the sea
the dead can feel the libel, and Mahoney
in his stripped skull is tortured by a lie.

## ROY McFADDEN

### *Lines Written near Downpatrick after an Air-raid*

The multicoloured fields of Down,
The waves of colour, throwing green
Wave on yellow, red and brown,
Tumbling with clouds in the wise river,
Still as a convent girl at prayer:
The foam of trees on the squat island,
The fists of flies fighting the air,
Make smooth the wrinkled heart and brain.

But in the cupboard of the mind
(Bolted against an iron time)
White hands cry pity, like the blind
Scars on the beauty of a face.
Time, pulsing like an angry tooth,
Thrusts thick hands of memory,
Toppling the tower of personal truth
And scattering the heart's trembling walls,
Scoring the mind with memories
Of the grey city behind the hills,
Of places where white-wristed peace
Lives only in a nursery tale:
Where silver-toothed machines bite wounds
In pity's side, and terrible
Wide-eyed, unsleeping men build mounds
Of tooth-white crosses, bared at night:
Where on night death strode from the east,
Upending houses with a careless hand,

And some I know died without priest,
And God forsook a burning sky.

Here, on this grass-grown quay, where sea-
Fresh barges lurched with merchandise
From England or even Wales maybe,
And rough, slow-spoken men had tales
For women in the town, and red
Pennies for children, only the sails
Of sighing gulls dip in salute.
And I, marooned in history,
Drown and drift with the waters, seeing
The souls of the Irish soldiery
Pass in a slow, white flight of geese.

## ROBERT GREACEN

### *Winter in Belfast*

Stranded here on this archipelago of winter
The evil wind swirls in the sail, and the bitter soil
Is hot and heavy to the hand that fondles.

Guard from fever, fire, infection the fervent fire
That streams its whiteness, like a maddened headlight tossing
On a copper sea, locked fast as mercury in palm.

## W. S. GRAHAM

### *By Law of Exile*

He who has been in exile
By law of words left in a long field
Ganged into stone and fierce foot still
Against place and den of dug creatures,
Who, hauled off love too into trial,
Heard cry the voices waked blind
As he lay white in a carriage of blood;
Suddenly with mouth from the long deck
Thundered stockstill on the keykept mile.
All hot estate and the fall to shelter
Fell to beginning gardens beyond blown call.
By act of cannonshot words manned
The silent cry's drenched trifle of joy.
Lay ending. On quiet cloth I see
Scrawled like first of angel's april
The tide with hooks on grassy script
Sloped and written in the trepanned hill.
All ocean's echoes deal into stone
This law of where I lie fertile
By spouted rock, manrise and law of exile.

### *The Second Journey*

Even this woman to her lover woven
Inherits my spidering stranger's mile upon mile
Over skeleton fevers of bells that speak
Swung in the shell of her creel-dwelling heart.
In a meadowing ballad my sprit points bliss
To plough in the rivering air of her footpath songs.
And away where forsworn profiles in her eyes
Peak their discovered metaphors through mortal dells
My brogue strikes kingdoms on enduring flints.
My cobbler's innocence breaks too fondly sprigged
Across her estuary of oyster-speaking womb.

Even the harlequin at blithe meridian
Snared at her elbow furred with a driven frost
Takes my wind's feathering dagger of crystal North
Over his legendary silt of brain.
His twelfth day dies. He herds peninsulas of dark
Brings round his sky the straying seeds of stars.
They roost in minnow-crossing circuses above his land.
And I move under climbing the coral sins
Their charmed way branching from his clown-bonny cairns
And stitch my floral spectre on his proud cataract
That spins the cascade-turning mills on his moral glade
And drains to farthest outlines of his vaulted fable.

Even this landscape piled in a level of love
Wrecks a rich filament of roads across my heel.
Three rivers rinse a desert from my prow.
A mountain's wiseman covers with perfect joy
The brow of a tumult of splendours hung in midamber.
Under my threading demon, direction in a gland
Throws round her dream's device a hermit's oval.
Over my hair in a gale of geese
The clown's volcano and the echoing girl's plateau.
And this saint's bridge that decorates with lightning
My shadow's perpetual visit, excels my birth.

## ERIC NIXON

### *Storm Over Langdale*

From what stable in or out of water
drive these horses renounced by the sea
climbing the long horizons and the fell
falling in vaulting tears on the sodden moor

in what eye Stickle with its gloom of pitch
gulls with their doom
days that have watched the gale
rocks that have cut all clouds
fluted with the wind the cantata of the storm

with what announced and widespread violence
these horses have they galloped the rakes
their hooves bannered the streams
made lino cuts of tarns
climbed without ropes Hell Corner

over the Terrace over the frown of Crinkle
atonal wind and cumulus have driven
folding the mountain ash
dashing the streams to diamonds

in what cave or under leaning crag to hide

Where can we hide in this steeple-chasing fury
where from the mist and the bitter wind
take our nailed boots and watered limbs
behind what wall
before what fire of welcome wood?

## *Pendragon*

O mediæval mirror
Uther relives
with mail and eagle

around his finger
digs his ring of grass and circle of water

over his green land under his mountains
monuments arise stone from the fells

his keep of peace throws shade on Eden
with cylinder of defiance protects the cattle

Uther relives now and long ago
as with a memory of crumbling stones
ikons of paint and sealing time
his hand of peace demands a sign.

## LAWRIE SCARLETT

### *Prognosis for John Bunyan*

This time of hours and peace,
of lenses in mirrors
of ice, is my future.

Deep in a drug like
Coleridge the future is
blue evening to my day.

The blue theatre of life
is the sky, and the moon
premature in the sky

is a silver warning.
And the path of Bunyan
is the hard future eye.

### *The Wanderers*

The village of stars fell,
the thousand wanderers
made a weary arrow,
made progress to their sky.

Unicorns and the soft
autumn wind shudder in
the darkness, the darkness
that cloaks the wanderers.

And the hearts of the streets
die like red-haired women.
As a distant shout the
wanderers made their way on.

## VALENTIN IREMONGER

### *Jezebel*

A blaze of hooves in the distance, dust
On the horizon and outside, suddenly,
Silence. A man like a king, arrogant,
Questioning, 'This is the woman.
Who is for me?'

Hands. Treachery, then? No; the godsent chance
For those who were envious of her sweating thighs
To wreck their hate in action. Four eunuchs
At the window smile
Down upon the king.

The screaming hooves broke her frail body.
Blood was sprinkled on the horses, on the wall,
Covered the rouge, the exciting lipstick,
Those eyes. The king
Came down to eat.

After the thanksgiving and the celebrations,
After the drinking, the heady songs, the amusements.
After the retiral of the virgins
And the beating of the drums,
The king remembered.

'Send the captains to see this woman. Bring her
On a purple shroud trimmed with gold, with ten
Torch-bearers lighting her last way.
She was a king's daughter
And a king's wife.'

The captains of a thousand sought her body
Down by the royal house with one gaping window
And the stained walls. They found no more of her
Than the skull, the feet
And the palms of the hands.

So was fulfilled the prophecy of the Lord.
The dogs devoured her body in the barony of Jezreel
And none can say, showing a tomb to visitors,
'Here lies she who died
Under the horses.'

It was a just end for one so wicked.
I was glad she died and cheered with the crowd
When her body no more resisted the rain of hooves
And the skidding wheels
Sixty years ago.

Three score years. One should have forgotten it all.
Yet in my corner, crouched over the fire, mumbling,
In my age, my hands tremble and her body
Lies unbroken before me, my youth
Breaks into flower.

## D. C. EASTWOOD

### *The Flowering Root*

Now is the time beneath a moon of marble
we love the ilex and its darkened leaves,
knowing the zebra splashed across its shadow
and the snake coiled, with roses on its tongue.

Listen, my nymphgirl, to the wind spray breaking,
to murmured syllables and sounding night;
the Milky Way has drowned the rippling branches,
the leaves are stars that whisper over stones.

Come then, you hammadryad of my tree,
your loins are pulsing oceans of the dark;
come, pluck the upright zebra with the rose
and let the satyr's hoof stamp on your mouth.

## LOIS LAMPLUGH

### *In the High Summer*

Light is an ecstasy; light is all we wish.
Ocean esctatic: we, un-neptuned fish.

Drawn by the bubble-bead attraction
Of bright refraction
The jackdaw, man,
Elaborates his span
And is immortal in mortality
Waking to walk midsummer morning, knowing
The hill silent, the air empty, and hearing
No sound but the sun trumpeting with splendour
One golden horn into the quiet.

Follow the hollow wave
Close, as a curving wall that lifts
Frozen against the sky.
The impending water hangs
Still, with its froth of blossom
Like a tree. The sea is hawthorn-hedged
Over its glassy walls; the sea is edged
With mirrors.
Replicas of the sky border the tired tide
And wading birds regard their images
Curved plump about their feet.

Only the sea can give us solace; only the sea
Defrauds the victor, and the vanquished flame
Falters, and all its fronds
Are crushed, are quenched, and turn to the tame
Tawny of embers.
But there remains
Always the blind sun shining in our storms
Blind months, blind mouths, are open for to drink
And drinking light are drowned
In blue glass bays of sky.
Drowning we sink

In reedy rivers, in the green
Of colour given form, and joined with earth and seen
Numbered among the old and placid gods.

The slow gods nod
The gods of sheer and sheen
The steep sleep of the trees
And lid-light, damascene.

Therefore without the sun
Earthling acknowledge it, we are alone,
Sundered, squandered, incomplete,
And time is narrowed to a bitter cone
And time has broken feet.
Yet would no creature ask a recompense
While summer spends its chosen gold;
The eternal sun sums the whole expense
Is ruined and grows cold.

Light is an ecstasy; light is all we wish.
Ocean ecstatic: we, un-neptuned fish.

## RAYMOND TRANFIELD

### *Anubis*

When shall we sacrifice the swanwhite cock
Upon the crimson altar of the world?
When shall we reave the prophet's panther skin,
Give sight to eyes and speech to silent mouths?

How long avoid the valleys and the hills
Treading the jackal paths that lead to death?
Lay offerings at the senseless sepulchres
That Anubis may anoint us with his breath?

The saffron cock struts the dismal lake
The jackal standards slant between the graves,
A wind wails by the barren cemetery
A howl moans through the mutilated world.

We who are drawn by priestled oxen
Breathe only darkness in the stone;
Ambition and despair surround us
And light the marble of our hieroglyphic home.

Silence: yet in the ghostsheets of the dawn
When lonely women watch the lonely grave,
We hear a cry that mourns for all mankind:
The jackal-woman's elegy of life.

When shall we offer up the swanwhite cock
And scald the blood of peace upon the knife?
When shall we steal our temple's magic fire,
The opener-of-the-ways lead us to life?

## JOHN BAYLISS

### *The Hyacinth*

The Hyacinth that lies between
green curves of glass in quietness,
(white roots in dark water and
a sheath restraining flower's delight):—
what loveliness its scent shall trail
or make incendiary the air
may not be seen in root and spear
until they take a warmer trial.

So we in darkness lie and wait
what sun determines our dismay
or what unfolding flower decides
the lighting of our private sky,
prepare to fight in heat or ice
fearing the frailty of our glass.

### *The Lovely Year*

Lovelier than autumn leaves,
their beauty increased by memory.
or eyes that turn from grief, is she.

Or winter holly red and dark on snow
or the brief moon in the night sky:

or the bright first blossoming
of Spring flowers in dusty rooms,
or the sensual agony of dreams
lustrous and still as a cut rose.

But especially is she
like the white lilac and green lavender,
lady of the undying year,
my altering love and my unchanged delight.

## SYLVIA READ

### *For Mary and Miranda: Now Grown Up*

The castle on the lawn,
And the two children
Bleeding on the stone of the sun turrets;
With the shadow-ducks, and the ferrets
Of shade in the garden
Licking the lawn.

And the one child was ivory
And played as the keys
Of the piano that was touched by mad Schumann,
And her game was between the span
Of ten fingers, his lackeys,
Whipping the ivory.

The other was red-wood,
Red metal, scarlet
Fruit fallen from the mouth of a wanton,
The kisses of Verlaine's phantom;
And her mouth was set
Against the red-wood.

And the mad and the bold
Played together in the garden.
With the ebony flowers that were fears
They made a chain of desires,
Daisies that would not harden
Between the mad and the bold.

The plunderer, time,
Took, in the last event,
And the game was touch-last from the thief,
Their childhood's green grief,
The flare of desires unspent,
And faith in time.

On the lawn, the castle
Still is, and the bricks
In the ruined walls of the sun crumble;
The returning eyes stumble
Over rooms that were attics
In the roof of the castle.

Now the two are pawns
Of the blind king
And shun sleep, for beware of the dreams;
And meet in interims;
But escape thinking
Of the purpose of pawns.

## SUSANNE KNOWLES

### *The Shell*

Strange that water-creatures should be dumb
When from a shell
—Conceived in what primordial slime—
Jubal brought forth the first deliberate note
Whence music's generations come.

Who of that conch may tell
From which the shapes of sound evolve—
The strings, percussion, wind?
Or what the primal harshness issuing from its throat
From reasoned music alien and remote:
Themes that resolve
As Jubal's shell, divinely disciplined;
In their complexities sublime.
And yet that sound that pierced the early air
Grows through the ear of time into the judgment-blast
That finally shall make mankind, or quick or dead, aware:
Lonely the first note and the last.
Comes from out that shell
All the vast consciousness of heaven and hell.

## N. K. CRUICKSHANK

### *An Evening in the War*

Out of the cloudy confusion of voices, faces,
Hail of exacting clocks, anxiety's
Currents, the gust this way and that, I drop
Onto the sudden world of my own past;

Whose grave, plain stillness meets me like a blow;
Whose quietness arrests me as the night does eyes;
I grope at impact of this thoughtful,
Time-forgetting youth and its large seasons.

I wait. And slowly from the backs of books
Those words prick out which are the stars of silence,
Realer than crowd on lips. Leopardi,
Bronte, Rainer Maria Rilke

Control my night. They dare me to dare to wait,
Staving off sounds, to hear my own heart speaking:
Stab me to eavesdrop on that simple
Quicksilver stream of loneliest truth.

## CECILY MACKWORTH

### *Poem*

You are my mystery; I have no other.
When sap leaps up from the root and out to the branches
That is the past-Pole track, the final exploration
When we shall be folded as close the one to the other
As we have wished, when no more light blanches
The vast reality of sensation.

Fed on the rich sap of a nameless tree
The heart nurses its blackness, singing canticles
I who have quivered with the smallest leaf
Know what alone the heart's cats-eye may see
Out of reach of the moon's tentacles
Hid from the starry wheatsheaf.

Make no sound, soul, you have your keeper.
Close lips on the night's nipples
Suck opiate from the eternal sleeper.

Fold yourself round in leaves, seek burial
Watch where a cloud stipples
A pattern across the sky; break off life's serial.

## DENISE LEVERTOFF

### *'They, looking back, all th' Eastern side beheld' . . .*

From darkness rose the vibrant grass, the just
Step in a world of flowers, bees, bright birds:
the afternoons
were dazed with sun
as the world grew,
a garden glowing behind a rooted house.

Trees in the park were wearing coats of mail:
the nightly fairytale lived there by day—
flying Mary-Anna,
little crying loaves,
eight wonderful stones.
To bed by daylight meant a secret journey.

But time grew hostile, the shining colours dull,
in silence and alone I saw the ramparts crumble;
the forest and the fool
darkened and were shades,
crying 'Alas!
My love, my love, this is disaster's ghost.'

Now I travel an unreal road
or climb the slow hills to a weary town,
but still sometimes
when brittle laughter breaks,
I know the gold, the gold,
Of Shelley's orange weighty as the world.

### *For B. M.*

I know an exiled shell
that hears the sea, and can tell
of serpents and a distant shore;
a fruit whose inmost core
whispers, 'near me is truth'; a voice that asks
no foolish questions of the durable masks
worn by the heart; a glove
encasing the reasons for pain, for love;
I know a questioner who is aware
that the answerer is sleeping somewhere

## JOHN ORMOND THOMAS

### *Before the Peace To Be*

Though under a strange new paper the bough,
straight as a spire, makes no spear, only
that the blood throws it up to the sky,
but it does not fall in our time only by the knife
and so the springtime is not mercenary,

and even though the bud appear arrow, and the sun
at evening lend a red poison to the tip of cancerous green,
flow the peaceful stars through the quiet water's heaven,
the same soil and soul run under Europe.

Wait for the first nominal peace of autumn, and
the same skirl of leaves, driven by the same foot
shatters the hillside like a globe on a tree at Christmas,
and the same winter creeps up along November
white in the gentle frost given by shortening days.

# REVIEWS

KATHLEEN RAINE, *Stone and Flower* (Nicholson & Watson, 6s.).

This book presents to us an integrated personality, and as the book itself is an emanation of that personality, it strikes us as a work, which, although infinitely varied and displaying many facets, possesses soundness and that quality of 'wholeness' which are so lacking in most collections of modern verse. The simple fact seems to be that poets, in order to attain to full, co-ordinating vision must have some solid basis for that vision in the heart and mind, in the soul. And that primary necessity is one acquired, not in a moment of comparative illumination (though the realization of what it should be will instantly be made plain in such a moment to those who feel the need), but by serious and careful thought extended over many years. This backcloth once made secure yet dispensable, vivid yet toneless, but always richer and more organic in the poet's consciousness; the poet, who during this period of unification has been constantly, and with love, though with varying success, relating the passing complexity of the Dream to the direct and fundamental simplicity of universal and eternal Truth; begins to see emerging here and there upon that carefully-prepared backcloth, his natural philosophy, the first brilliant points of tapestry that are the real words. And these, though ordinary, will live with the warmth and inevitability of true life upon the sustaining threads of a certainty that is musical and not dogmatic, and a faith that is Christ-like, and religious, in the widest sense of embracing all things and all experience with full, compassionate tenderness and creative love.

Miss Raine's first book of poems is sustained throughout by an unblinded tenderness, a true awareness of the essential nature of human life, and its relation to values that are timeless. The poems in *Stone and Flower* are almost always religious in their recognition of eternal values and the relation of man, woman, trees, love, stones, poetry, Nature and the universe, to themselves and to everything around them. To everything and everyone the world is recognizable and foreign, unendingly curious, mysterious and plain. The whole book suggests that Miss Raine has been profoundly influenced by all that is most lasting in the work of Eliot, and that her natural vision (it is something beyond philosophy) is fundamentally the same as his. The title of the book is paradoxical—but it

is a paradox whose poles are part of the same earth, where stone and flower are indestructibly the same, the one living in the other, both living in the poet, and the poet in them both. In the poem 'Prayer', there is a cry for fulfilment of life; to be revolved, in spite of fear and pain, not into death, but 'out of me' into 'the golden sowing of heaven's harvest'.

> '*Open the gates of sky to me, open the gate*
> *Not into my death, but out of me, into that peace*
> *Where sun and moon revolve . . .*
> *. . . Open the arms of life to me, name me, claim me*
> *Bride me, hide me, on a mountain lay me, on a cloud*
> *While the womb spins dreams, and the star's spindles*
> *Turn, and the forests and birds are woven*
> *Into the distance of the heart's separation.*'

Worked into this visionary canvas are many aspects of contemporary and eternal experience. Perhaps the most impermanent (in terms of ordinary life), certainly the most longed-for, the most essential—human love, forms the subject of many of these poems. To the poet, human love is the love of the whole world, night, eternity; and to her the world is made most plain, and life given its greatest significance, in the pathos of mortal love. In a kiss, a touch of the fingers, is love that has come from 'creation's deep untroubled retrospect':

> '*Yours is the face that the earth turns to me. . . .*
> *. . . With your eyes, the reflecting rainbow, the sun's light*
> *Sees me.*
>
> *When your hand touches mine, it is the earth*
> *That takes me—the deep grass,*
> *And rocks and rivers; the green graves,*
> *And children still unborn, and ancestors,*
> *In love passed down from hand to hand from God.*'

Death (though that is only a convenient word with too-human associations for the indescribable state of being and not-being) forms the subject of many poems, which by paradox are poems in which the assurance of immortality is plainest and most comforting. Miss Raine makes us feel imaginatively the nature of this passing—and the promise of eternity implicit in all death.

And in 'Tu Non Se' in Terra, Si Come tu Credi . . .' she gives us the image of the angel on every summit—the angel of a personal

salvation in a common resurrection, and assures us that when the human form passes into the earth,

> '*when senses faint into the ground,*
> *and time and place go down the wind*',

our mortal heaviness and blindness will be removed:

> '*Those nameless clouds that storm and swirl*
> *about the mountain are the veil*
> *that from these sightless eyes shall fall.*'

Human life, to the poet, represents an intermediate stage of darkness connecting the periods of innocence:

> '*The breath of life shapes darkness into leaves.*'

'The air is full of farewell', she says, in 'On Leaving Ullswater'. And indeed one feels that fulness of farewell (which is in the deepest sense a perpetually-renewed greeting) at all times in these poems. In 'London Revisited', the peculiar urgency of the poet's vision is not impaired, but endorsed and quickened, by contemporary concessions, so vast and so personal, to the elementary plan: and here there is only one vision fully acceptable, and one which in itself is beyond sentimentality or obvious reportage. It is not the occasion to ponder over good and evil, for these moralities are shallow and invalid in the face of the one actual morality:

> '*There is no foothold for our solid world,*
> *No hanging Babylon for the certain mind*
> *In rooms tattered by wind, wept on by rain.*
>
> *Wild as the tomb, wild as the mountainside*
> *A storm of hours has shaken the finespun world*
> *Tearing away our palaces, our faces, and our days*',

though regret must hold us all in a human clasp, until we become as saints, and can pity calmly, after the tempest, those 'fragments of past delight, and of past selves' that are left in the empty dawn.

The agony of perception is always present in the passion and exactitude of these poems. In 'The Golden Leaf', a leaf floating on water is apprehended so keenly that it becomes part of the poet's body, and her mind receiving it becomes the dark pool, 'the tide of the world', on which, 'like a wounded star' it turns slowly and sinks. That freshness of vision is in the lovely opening 'Lyric' and 'The

Fall', in 'Tiger Dream' and 'Angelus', which concludes with the line that has something of the whole book in its ordinary words and rare pathos:

'. . . *I pass, I pass, while dreams remain.*'

But it is when the poet allows the human reactions to everlasting departing and returning to appear that her poetry is perhaps most moving, as in 'Thought by the Thames in Summer', where simple fear makes her reluctant to give herself, 'ignorant and outcast', to the inevitable. She says: 'I fear to pass the surface of the river', to be, to drown, 'drawn down into your arms, your element, your living'. And the struggle against that fear (though her vision, like a faith, is still innate and in the deepest sense indestructible), and the loss of a moment's passing loveliness is expressed in:

'*Between our seeing and our being together*
*Appears the impassable seeming of a world—*
*A mirror, a battling angel, empty air—*
*End and beginning, birth and death, become each other*
*In sea, that drowns what it creates, my love, my terror.*'

At this stage, to counteract fear, personal faith in the universal process assumes a reality and reassuring strength beside which the general conception of religious faith is faint. Eternity is in us all, not because of our personal leanings towards those arbitrary qualities, 'good' and 'evil' (and here the man who accepts most readily and unquestioningly his situation in eternity will be the highest standard of goodness), but simply because we exist, we *are*. In Miss Raine's poetry, faith is implicit in every line, and is more prominent and more personal than in Eliot's:

'*what nerve have I, beloved Lord, what sense*
*to know the holy presence of my God?*'

Her sense that nothing can ever be lost, 'obedient to the unseen sun', assumes the character of faith in the lines from 'Vegetation':

'*the dance of love, creation,*
*out of time moves not a leaf,*
*and out of summer, not a shade.*'

Barbara Hepworth's crystal forms with burning core and subtle facets parallel the clarity, cleanness, purity and depth which are the essential elements of the book.

JAMES KIRKUP

RICHARD CHURCH, *Twentieth-Century Psalter* (Dent, 5s. net).

Mr. Richard Church's *Twentieth-Century Psalter* is one of the most quietly pleasurable books of verse that have appeared for some time. There is nothing flashily attractive about it, and in fact, on first dipping into it, one might characterize it as 'pedestrian'. But in this very ordinariness lies its strength; and it gains immensely by being read as a whole.

With a Psalm for each morning and evening for thirty days, Mr. Church,

> '*Touching the harp that once enraptured Saul,*
> *Transforming all our twentieth-century science,*
> *Our bankers' paradise, polluted skies*',

seeks to provide contemporary man with an answer to despair and an anchorage both in God (though not solely the Christian presentation of Him) and Nature—epitomized here in the willow and the quince tree the poet has planted beside his pond. By these permanencies he measures the griefs, sufferings, and sorrows of our times, particularly the agonies of the Blitz, and revealing in that perspective their essential transience, prophesies even for our vengeance

> '*No self-congratulations, or praising*
> *Of primitive gods, after the bombers*
> *Have done, and the grass grows in Europe*';

when man's predatory desires give way to

> '*The instinct that a stranger is a brother.*'

Yet reliance on ultimate touchstones of survival does not make him the more optimistic for either the young or the old about the new planners' Utopia:

> '*A young man looks*
> *To an improbable future. He can choose*
> *Nothing with certainty. His only books*
> *Must be the texts of death*';

while the old find

> '*No comfort in a promissory world*
> *Whose architecture is to follow war*',

remembering that they have 'seen this blue-print once before'. Yet, like many of his younger contemporaries among the new war poets, Mr. Church recognizes the individual's responsibility for a world that has produced a cataclysm like this, and epitomizes our whole hapless generation as

> '*A monument to man's fatuity*
> *When an ironic god first gave him wings.*'

The 'Psalms' are written in a pleasing variety of metres, nearly all of them successful, except for such an occasional awkwardly scanning line as

> '*The breaking of the nations' blessing of peace.*'

The psalter cannot be called 'unequal' in any adverse sense, but naturally some parts are better than others, and we would express our personal preference for the *Seventh*, the *Twelfth*, and the *Evening* of the *Twenty-fourth Days*, and for the subtle modulations in vowel music and internal rhyme heard at its best, perhaps, in the *Morning* of the *Nineteenth Day:*

> '*Though the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad*
> *With the mirth of God, the laughter of flowers*
> *In the green hours of maytime, where light comes after*
> *The dew, and distils it, and fills it with bright*
> *Yet ancient pleasures that are ever new;*
> *Mankind makes music set to other measures*',

—it is 'the music of metal' bringing death; but the poet like the psalmist of old remains true instead to his immortal vision:

> '*This morning I saw the invisible God*
> *Made visible in flames of petal and bud.*'

Mr. Church's mastery of his technical medium grows more sure with each succeeding volume.

HERMANN PESCHMANN.

LAWRENCE DURRELL, *A Private Country*, Poems (Faber, 6s.).

One can imagine the academic critic (strange animal) smelling his way through this book somewhat as follows:

(1) 'Fangbrand'—obvious influence the early poems of Eliot.

(2) 'In Crisis' the first verse:

> '*My love on Wednesday letting fall her body*
> *From upright walking won by weariness,*
> *As on a bed of flesh by ounces counted out,*
> *Softer than snuff or snow came where my body was*'

—alliteration; perhaps Langland.

(3) 'The Hanged Man'—Jacobean dramatists. Etc., etc.

But the academic critic be damned! Here is a bawdy, sensitive, child-and-woman-loving poetic genius with few debts, few affectations, and a feeling for Greece unknown in Byron.

Read

> '*The islands which whisper to the ambitions*
> *Washed all winter by the surviving stars . . .*'

(*At Epidaurus*)

or at Matapan.

> '*Here the lucky in summer*
> *Tied up their boats; a mile from land*
> *The cicada's small machine came like a breath;*
> *Touching bottom saw their feet become*
> *Webbed and monstrous on the sandy floors.*
> *Here wind emptied the snowy caves: the brown*
> *Hands about the tiller unbuckled.*
> *Day lay like a mirror in the sun's eye.*
> *Olives sleeping, rocks hanging, sea shining.*
> *And under Arbutus the scriptural music*
> *Of a pipe beside a boy beside a bay*
> *Soliloquised in seven liquid quibbles.*'

Or in late winter as an island of

> '*mist and pelicans*' . . . '*guarded*
> *by the green wicks of cypresses.*'

Read these together with 'The Ballad of the Good Lord Nelson':

*'stiff on a pillar with a phallic air'*,

and note the intense atmosphere of death and silence in 'Nemea', and perhaps there may be some excuse for the excitement of this review.

This is not to say that there will be no occasion for annoyance. Satirical fantasy, as in 'General Uncebuncke', sometimes becomes tiring, and

*'Thy will be done in Baden Baden,*
*In Ouchy, Lord, and in Vichy'*

was never very good even in Eliot. Nor is 'The Sonnet of Hamlet' often very clear. Lines such as:

*'I hang her name upon this frantic pothook'*

make one feel that even madness should be restrained, and make the sequence seem reminiscent of the beauty and absurdity of 'Isabella'.

But Durrell sweeps all these things away like small bad apples in a tremendous harvest. Line after line would satisfy touchstones better than those of Arnold:

*'. . . love, sweet love, who weeps by the water-clock:*
*Telling how rope ripens on a high hill:*
*Yellower than plaintains by the duct touched:*
*The algebraic flute blue under Jupiter:*
*Solitary in my penitence as the owl':*

—they are endless, and by any other test the poetry will stand as well.

To sum up, Lawrence Durrell has the faculty of magic together with the sensitivity and humanity essential to a great poet. He is one of the best poets writing in English today.

JOHN BAYLISS

KENNETH ALLOTT, *The Ventriloquist's Doll* (The Cresset Press, London, 5s. net); J. F. HENDRY, *The Orchestral Mountain* (Routledge, 5s. net).

Poetry is the product of a solitude in which the individual acknowledges life. The process of poetry, then, has no plural: a crowd or a school cannot occupy solitude. But poets as men are gregarious beings; hence there are tendencies, like directions.

Looked at from this classifying viewpoint these two books of verse might well represent the dichotomy of poetic approach today. Kenneth Allott, we might consider, as the tail-piece of the poetry of the 'Thirties with its deliberate unlyrical vernacular, while Hendry might stand as the protagonist for the non-conforming 'Forties with their 'rehabilitation of romanticism' and the individual.

The theme of both is the theme of death: for Allott, the dying of a social class; for Hendry, the death of a single woman. The first sees life in the perspective of history, and adds his comments à la Walter Winchell. The second is attentive to his own existence from which he deduces universal conclusions. His comparison is not with the reporter, but rather with the philosopher who seeks in the chaos of his own nature for some pattern inherent to all humanity.

The verse of Kenneth Allott possesses a more entertaining texture of idiom than that of any English-writing poet I know today. He crams his lines with the knick-knacks of epithet, the gadgets and gew-gaws of imagery. He has much of MacNiece's virtuosity, Auden's intellectual bravavura, and Grigson's shooting of 'significant' detail. History is the ventriloquist and the poet accepts the rôle of its doll; but what a sharp pair of eyes it has, how incisive a voice for all its passive position. The book is an album of photo-snaps that sum up this pessary-slot-machine society. It provides us with a smart dictionary to the war and post-war-pre-war suburban weltanschauung. The book is a kind of illustrated catalogue to a sociology of Mass Observation. There are many nut-shell definitions, wisecracks, squibs (successful and faulty):

> *'The towns of houses, massed security*
> *Out-generalled by a later century*
> *Are hearse-plumes on an old economy.'*

Francis Scarfe, in 'Auden and After,' has commented on this poet's 'self-appointed capacity of "outsider" by means of which "Allott is at once 'observer', poet and moralist". The Goal of the observer,' he adds, 'like that of Tiresias, is to see and suffer all but

to conclude nothing.' For the present book this mostly holds true save in such poems as 'Ode in Wartime', where Allott reaches out in demand and hope beyond his witty defeatist reportage.

J. F. Hendry, besides being a poet, has a claim to be known as the principal theorist of the movement termed 'The New Apocalypse'. In an essay which appeared in 'Kingdom Come' he defined the 'apocalyptic element' as 'that particular vision which grasps elemental forces either in birth or dissolution'. His is a poetry of conflict; a violent dialectic of images in the pangs of labour and the anguish of dying:

> '*This earth hides in her smock a nation*
> *Flowering forever through frustration.*'

The poems of this book express the attempt of the poet to readjust himself to the universe now that the woman he loved is dead. Although the object of love is gone the passion and philosophy of love remain. In a poem that recalls the sentiments of Wordsworth's 'Lucy' the poet visualizes his pantheistic goal:

> '*I raise the calyx of time*
> *And this great death*
> *To glimpse the flower beneath;*
> *The promise of an image yet to come.*
> *Still as the sun above*
> *The future stands, and I must move*
> *As the whole world moves, towards your love.*'

If the poetry of Allott is topographical in the close precision of its minutiæ, that of Hendry, through the largeness of his figures, is as cosmographical as the verse of Shelley. It has something of the latter's vast vagueness, as one who sees visions through a planetary eclipse. Certain lines, however, stand out with the powerful gesture and stance of characters from a myth:

> '*In a helmet plumed with fountains*
> *The hero shouts in the hall.*'

DEREK STANFORD.